

## DEVOTED TO THE ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

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WHOLE NO. 193.

## The Principles of Nature.

## THE DAVENPORT CIRCLE AGAIN.

New York, December 31, 1855.

The following article was written by Thomas L. Smith, Esq., a lawyer residing at New Albany, Ind., formerly one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of that State, and now on a temporary visit to this city. It was written on the evening of the day on which the manifestations occurred, without any view of its publication, and as a part of memoranda he has been making of the spiritual phenomena he witnessed in this city, for his own private use and that of his friends. Knowing the eager curiosity with which our readers are now perusing every reliable description of the phenomena developed through the Davenport mediums, we have solicited from Mr. Smith the privilege of publishing his manuscript, and he has, with some reluctance, consented to place it in our hands for that purpose. This description will be perused with special interest by our readers in Indiana, and other portions of the West, where Mr. Smith is extensively known.

Having heard that some extraordinary manifestations were to be witnessed at the spiritual circle held by a family named Davenport, I went this afternoon to attend one. It was to be held at No. 125 Bowery, at two o'clock, P. M.

Being there a little before the time, and understanding the manifestations were to be made in darkness, I examined particularly the room and its contents. It was an oblong hall, about forty feet in length by twenty in breadth. It was carpeted, and looked as if it had been fitted up for the use of some society. At the end opposite the entrance there was a narrow platform raised about a foot from the floor, with a desk in the center, and one at either end, as if for the use of a presiding officer, and a secretary and treasurer. At this end there were also three large windows, apparently opening into a back yard, but they were covered with a heavy drapery to effectually exclude the light. There was apparently but one door of entrance, and seats were disposed around the sides and ends of the room, which was in the second story of the building. The ceiling was about fourteen or fifteen feet in height from the floor. Two ordinary gas-burners depended from the ceiling near the middle of the room, and there was one or more projecting from the end wall, near the desks before mentioned. Two or three of these burners were lighted. There was no other window, door, or other opening into the room that I could perceive.

In front of the central desk on the platform, there was a small table with a marble top, and on this table was placed a dulcimer, a violin, and a speaking trumpet. The dulcimer is a stringed instrument about two feet in length, and nearly the same width, and weighed, I should suppose, about eighteen or twenty pounds.

Near the center of the room there was an oval table, made of mahogany or some other heavy wood. It had an extension apparatus, by which this end could be drawn apart and the table lengthened by placing movable boards on the framework. There was no other furniture in the room beside that already mentioned and the seats, which were cushioned benches and heavy chairs, permanently fixed along the sides of the apartment, and some loose arm-chairs.

Upon this oval table there had been placed a guitar, a banjo, one or two violins, a tambourine, a hand bell about three inches in diameter, and a large speaking trumpet.

Two men appeared to have charge of the arrangements. One of them was the father of the mediums. These latter were two boys of ordinary and rather rustic appearance. One appeared to be about sixteen, the other about fourteen years of age. I was favorably impressed with the appearance of all the party. They seemed perfectly willing, and even desirous that every pretension should be taken to prevent imposition or deception, but when any proposition was made they said they must first ask the Spirits. They announced, indeed, that they could not promise anything, or make any arrangement whatever without such previous consultation.

At the time appointed the entrance door was closed and locked. There were about twenty-four or twenty-six persons present in the room, about half the number being ladies. The two boys were then seated at opposite ends of the oval table in arm-chairs. The spectators, together with the elder Davenport and his assistant, took seats around the sides and ends of the room, and all joined hands to prevent any one from taking part in the performances without the knowledge of the others. Throughout all the manifestations special care was taken to have the hands of the two persons above mentioned held by some others in the company.

These dispositions being made, the lights were extinguished by shutting off the gas, and the room made dark. The visitors were requested to remain perfectly still. In a few moments a slight thrumming was heard upon the strings of the guitar, which continued a short time and then died away. After a short interval several quick and loud sounds were heard from the guitar, as if the fingers of a player had been run over them abruptly and forcibly. These sounds were succeeded by a loud rapping, which, the medium said, indicated that the Spirits desired the alphabet to be called. One of them accordingly began calling the letters, and soon spelled out a request from the Spirits that the mediums should be tied.

A light was accordingly made, and some ropes were produced with which each boy was firmly tied to the chair in which he sat. Their hands were also bound together by means of handkerchiefs, and one of the arms of each boy was fastened to the arm of his chair by a handkerchief. Every one in the room was satisfied that the boys were securely tied, and could not, in

that condition, reach or handle any of the instruments on the table with any effect.

The boys being thus fastened, the others again joined hands, and the lights were put out. Pretty soon there was again heard a thrumming on one or more of the stringed instruments; then sounds, as if they were moving about the table and striking each other; then loud snaps as if some of the strings of the guitar or violins were broken. Directly the trumpet appeared to be thrown violently upon the floor, and the stringed instruments, or some of them, were sounded in different directions, though not very far from the table, and occasionally their cases appeared to be thumped against each other and upon the floor. After these noises had continued a short time they ceased, and the mediums spoke out and said their hands were being untied. Directly several things were thrown about the room. I was myself hit violently in the left eye by something. A light was now called for, and upon the room being lighted, I saw lying upon the floor near me two handkerchiefs that had been tied with as many knots as possible. They were handkerchiefs belonging to some of the visitors, which had been used in tying the boys' hands or arms. One of them was, doubtless, the substance by which I had been hit. It was found also that some of the instruments that had been upon the table had been removed therefrom, and left in different parts of the room.

Another disposition was now made. The instruments were replaced upon the table, and the hands of the mediums being untied, two gentlemen seated themselves at opposite sides of the table between the mediums, so that there were then four persons around the table, who all joined hands. I was informed that one of these gentlemen was Mr. Day, well known for his improvements in the India-rubber manufactures, and that the other was a gentleman of considerable respectability in the position both hands of each medium were securely held by Mr. Day and Mr. Sweet, so that it was impossible that either of them could make any use of either hand without the knowledge of those gentlemen. As before, the other two men were again taken charge of by the visitors present, and all again joined their hands.

Things being thus disposed, the light was again shut off. Almost instantly the same kind of sounds were heard as before. The trumpet was thrown from the table on the floor—the strings of the instruments were thrummed upon—the bell was jingled—the tambourine was thumped—and occasionally it would seem as if they were all clashed together. Sometimes the instruments were heard in different parts of the room. The guitar, violin and tambourine were felt passing along in front of the visitors, occasionally touching some parts of their bodies, the strings sounding as they passed along. All at once there was a violent clash among the instruments on the table, and it was announced that the trumpet, which had been previously thrown upon the floor, had been thrown back upon the table with great violence. The gentlemen who were seated with the mediums said they could feel the instruments lifted up and placed upon their heads, their shoulders and different parts of their bodies. These manifestations having continued about ten minutes, rappings were heard which, the mediums said, called for light, and the room was accordingly lighted.

When the light was produced, the parties at the table were found precisely as they had taken their places. Messrs. Day and Sweet were holding the hands of the mediums, and said they had continued to do so all the time. During the darkness, a lady (who I was told was Miss Gould, the poetess) had a handkerchief violently snatched out of her hand, and it was found under the table at which the mediums were sitting. As before, some of the instruments that had been upon the table were found in different parts of the room, mostly in the laps of the persons sitting around.

After an interval of a few moments, the mediums continuing at the table still fastened to their chairs, two ladies took the places of Messrs. Day and Sweet, and held the hands of the mediums. The other parties were arranged as before, and the lights put out. Very soon the instruments began to "chime" and played, but not so violently. In a little while the table began to move, carrying the parties around it along with it. It could be heard dragging slowly and heavily along the carpet. The ladies held the hands of the mediums announced that they were forced from their seats, but the mediums, being fastened, were dragged along in their chairs. One of them called out repeatedly, and apparently in earnest, for a light; but the elder Davenport requested them to hold on, and not be alarmed. While the table was thus heard grinding along on the floor, the instruments seemed to be passing around the room, sounding as before. Presently the table arrived at a corner of the room in close proximity to three or four ladies who were sitting there, and the gas-burners were now relighted.

The table was found to have been moved a distance of ten or twelve feet. The chairs of the mediums had been carried along with it, and the extension part had been drawn out, and the two ladies forced into the interval between the ends. It was also found that while most of the instruments that had been placed upon it were removed to different parts of the room, the dulcimer, which was before upon the other table, had been carried over and put in their place. The distance which this instrument was carried must have been eight or ten feet, and it must have been lifted over the heads of several persons who were between the table on which it was resting before the light was put out, and the table on which it was found.

A gentleman who appeared to be a stranger to all present, now requested an opportunity to satisfy himself by being placed alone with the mediums. The instruments having been replaced, he seated himself at one side of the table, holding both hands of each medium in his own. The other parties were disposed as before.

Upon the light being put out, the same noises were soon heard. Presently the trumpet was thrown violently to the end of the room. The stringed instruments were heard in different places. Directly the tambourine was heard thumping vigorously, and with something like a musical cadence, apparently upon the head of one of the parties at the table. The guitar and violins, or some of them, evidently passed around the room in close proximity to the persons who were sitting around, touching their feet, knees, bodies, etc., and occasionally thumping against the wall, all the time emitting sounds as if some persons were playing upon them, or running fingers across the strings. Occasionally the tambourine was heard thumping, and the bell ringing, and sometimes there were violent clashing, twangings and clangs that had little resemblance to the sound of any known instrument.

On the light being restored, the gentleman at the table said he had held the hands of the mediums all the time. Being requested to give his name, he said it was Briggs, and that he was a citizen of Baltimore. He said he had willed the tambourine to touch him upon the head, and it had done so by beating him a considerable time with a good deal of force. He further said he had never before witnessed any such manifestations.

After these experiments, the mediums appeared to be a good deal exhausted, and an intermission was had of about ten minutes, to enable them to recover.

Their impressibility was weakened in proportion to the number who were placed in contact with them. It was, therefore, proposed now to place them at the table by themselves, and as it was supposed to be pretty well ascertained by the previous experiments, that the instruments were moved and played upon without their mechanical agency, they were not again tied.

Being placed at the table again, the visitors were disposed as before, and the lights put out. Soon the noise again commenced with much greater violence. The stringed instruments were evidently moving about the room in every direction, and with great velocity. Sometimes they were heard near the floor, then near the ceiling; now at one end of the room, and then at the other. They seemed to move with the swiftness of bats, and to be sailing about the apartment in much the same manner that those centuries do. The motion or wind could be distinctly felt as they passed along. Presently the bell, the tambourine, the trumpets, and all the other instruments appeared to join in the light, clashing, banging, jangling and clashing in a manner that was almost terrific. I have no doubt the noise might have been heard at the distance of half a square. They all appeared to be flying around and about the room in all directions. Two or three times there were wild whistlings that might have been a cross between such as could be emitted from the human lips and the shrieks of a locomotive; and occasionally, a hoarse voice was heard speaking through the trumpet.

Altogether, it was a most extraordinary performance. For myself, I crouched down for fear of being hit by the flying missiles. But some how or other, the Spirits, or whatever it was that whirled those things about so curiously, and with such a clatter, appeared disposed to deal gently with their visitors; for though all were occasionally touched, with the exception of myself, no one was struck violently.

This racket must have continued from five to ten minutes, when it died away. A voice was heard calling out, "John, will you make a light for us before we part?" This request was repeated two or three times. In a moment or two a luminous ball, about as large as a hickory nut, shot across the room like a small meteor. Directly another like it followed. Then a streak of light somewhat like a very minute streak of chain-lightning was plainly perceived. The room was now relighted, and the performance closed.

I have endeavored to describe these extraordinary scenes as correctly as I am able to do. I can give no opinion as to the power which I caused them to be produced. Many, no doubt, would say from reading such an account, it was some kind of trickery.

Most of the persons present, except myself, were professed Spiritualists, who sincerely believe that disembodied Spirits can and do daily give manifestations of their presence; but they were respectable and intelligent persons, utterly incapable, as I have every reason to believe, of any complicity with the mediums for purposes of deception. On the contrary, some of them expressed suspicions that the mediums might endeavor to increase or add to the manifestations by their own agency, and were active in suggesting precautions to prevent imposition.

It is possible the mediums may have done something of the kind. Some things that took place might be accounted for on that supposition. The handkerchief that hit me may have been knotted and thrown by one of the mediums. The whistle may have been sounded by means of some instrument they had concealed. One of them may have spoken through the trumpet; and they may have aided to increase the clatter at the last part of the exhibition.

But on the other hand, many of the most remarkable manifestations can not be accounted for in this way. They were

produced while the mediums were tied and their hands held. It was therefore certain that they did not move or play upon the instruments. Who, or what was it then that did? Could it have been any other persons known to be present? These were all holding each others hands. Could confederates have entered during the darkness from any concealed opening into the room? I should think not. The visitors were ranged round the sides and ends of the room in such manner that intruders must have stumbled over some of them. Beside, no one could have passed round in the darkness with the swiftness necessary to carry and play upon the instruments in the manner they were carried and played upon, without blundering against somebody; and it would have required half a dozen persons at least to have made the various noises that were heard at the same time in different places. Frequently the instruments were heard touching the ceiling and emitting sounds at a height that could not be reached by a person standing on the floor.

The lights exhibited toward the close of the manifestations had a peculiar appearance, different from anything of the kind I had ever before seen. They appeared very faint, yet clearly perceptible. They could not be mistaken for anything else but lights; but they cast no light whatever, so far as I could perceive, upon the surrounding objects.

## SPIRITUAL QUACKERY.

BY J. H. ROBINSON.

Nor many years have elapsed since Magnetism was denounced by the learned professions, and mocked at by the multitude. Based upon natural law, sustained by indisputable phenomena, it conquered popular prejudices and survived the crusades of pseudo-savants. Eminent philosophers were silenced, and the materialist, but finally drew back into its shell, watching the new power with jealous eyes.

When Magnetism had won its way to general credence, there was a great change in the order of things. A slough is thrown from healing wounds, and a scum rises upon the surface of fluids working themselves clear. A regiment of harpies, hungry human kites and greedy cormorants at once appeared; they came into being like the frogs when Moses put forth his potent rod in the land of Egypt. They had their visible dwellings in cribs and kennels, in obscure courts and pent-up places, in alleys and streets; built their nests in deserted rookeries, feathering them from the pockets of the credulous. They converted this divine power into current coin of the commonwealth, giving in return a few crude guesses and the second-hand prescriptions of fourth-rate quackery. Strangers were "taken in," the unsophisticated confounded, and prudent families tickled by "a refuge of fees." Charlatans put forth unblushingly their flaming announcements—"great clairvoyants, wonderful seers, healers of the sick," looked into futurity. These magnetic saints (among sinners) declared themselves feet to the lame, eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, life to the dying—"all things to all men," that "all men" wanted. This crawling flock of rapacious ravens pecked away at the reputation of Magnetism—with an occasional pass at each other during the scruff. They desecrated a mighty power—a mystery full of wondrous gifts and sacred revelations—to be employed by the good man, the earnest soul, the lover of humanity. Magnetism has an immortal vitality, or its life-blood would have been sapped long ago.

Let us be just; there is heat in ice, vitality in corruption, honor among thieves, and well-meaning persons among all classes of deceivers and ignorances. But "great clairvoyants" never claim to be such, and truly great men are known by their modesty. Pretension kills the highest claim, and in the nature of things shows, wherever it appears, that it is the opposite of what it wishes to be thought.

From magnetic quackery we pass, by an easy gradation, to charlatanism, professionally superannuated. It would seem at this particular stage in the world's history, that "heaven is opened," and a large representation of the angels employed in dropping down deceptions and laments, embrocations and washes, tonics and elixirs, sales and pills! The great medical element of upper air has broken loose of a sudden! There is a sanatory convulsion in the spheres! Spirits of high and low degree have dropped their musical instruments, and gone into the study of pathology and therapeutics! This exacerbation of heavenly philanthropy is marvelous, and may well be regarded with some distrust. The advent of spiritual medicaments may remind one of the rider of the pale horse, and the evils that "followed with him."

If the empiricism of heaven and earth be indeed combined against us, prayers should be addressed to God with a fervor hitherto unknown in the history of human experience. The press counts its spiritual-doctor advertisements by the column. As literary compositions, many of these dumb vouchers tell to the wise and prudent the story of their authors' ignorance, presumption, or delirium. The prescription rates vary (according to the degree of spiritual power possessed by the earthly instrument of heaven's benevolence) from two to ten dollars—in advance. The thing does not stop here. We have developing media who fit the crude article of humanity for the kingdom—in masses, or one at a time—for twenty pieces of silver. Being brought happily out of your crudity, another with "a mission to perform," will tell your "needs" for half that sum, after which you will be ready to pay a physical medium fifteen dollars per evening for doing "his Father's business!" Those who can not

afford this luxury can commune with departed mothers and brothers for one dollar an hour—a sum which a *sempiternal* may earn in two days through much *seariness* and *heaviness* of heart.

Truth is high—Gospel exorbitant; the common people can not hear it gladly! Jesus, the lover of humanity, had no place to lay his head; but some of our modern world-workers demand prices that the *reflex* among us can not afford.

The true reformer asks but to live—to live and suffer (if need be) for the humanity he loves. His reward is not of this world; and his house is not built with lands, but eternal and in the heavens. He who can not endure *any* *labor* in the cause of human elevation; his soul is *great* enough—his aspirations not high enough—his thoughts not pure enough.

What must the world say to such palpable shams—salvages unlooked by the defenders of the faith? Look at the matter; consider it well—note its repulsive aspects. If there must be a tariff on spiritual enlightenment, it is a reasonable *fee*, so that the benefits, if there be any, shall be within the reach of all; but that unblushing *clerical* (or *hallucination*) that makes an immodest parade of its own heavenly gifts, and asks a week's wages for an hour's time, either in the examination of diseases or the exercise of occult powers for any other purpose, is certainly reprehensible. Such charges for such objects are a negation and a contradiction of those very qualities which the "doctors" and "seers" profess to have; for if they really possess such noble gifts, they would have more benevolence and less pretension. If the nations are to be healed, obviously they will not be at present prices. Spiritual services must be put at a larger figure; for the man who receives six dollars per week can not afford to pay five or ten for a prescription, a letter-sheet of *remedies*, or any medicine with the *quack*. Her really valuable gifts without injustice. There need be no flourish of trumpets before the performance of a miracle. It is the charlatan only who boasts of his attainments and heralds his greatness in newspaper paragraphs. The world's priests, prophets and saints have been men of low estate, content with a bare subsistence.

The writer's advice to all is: Keep away from those who demand more for an hour's time than you can earn in a day at the hardest kind of manual labor. Depend upon it, "it is paying too dear for the whistle." This kind of Spiritualism is not for *hobby-riders*, *clod-hoppers*, sewing girls and servants. It is too expensive for our Father's poor—the larger portion of his family; they must find something cheaper. Well, they can afford to wait, or what is better, look within; know, obey, and become a law unto themselves. How many persons are engaged in the outside phenomena of Spiritualism that are influenced solely by the mere article of money! Such follow Spiritualism (so called) as an avocation solely; they get the means of subsistence, and that is the light and depth of their aspiration. They never feel the pure glow of the love of humanity in their souls; their hearts never vibrated to the notes of angelic philanthropy; doing good for the love of goodness is to them an avocation deep and unfathomable.

The label of "Spiritualism" is not sufficient to save that which is contemptible from contempt. The whiteness of the whitest sepulcher can not make us forget the rottenness within. We judge of the *master* by the *servants*. We know something of the *work* by the *instruments* employed. We know something of the *truth* by the *results*. This test is the mathematics of benevolence; it will compute philanthropists and teachers, leaders and helpers, Pauls and prophets, Samaritans, seers and saviors. It is the golden gauge Heaven has given to man.

Shall we look for the benefactors of mankind among those money-loving ones? As well look for a lost atom in the sea. Shall this class be encouraged by the spiritual press? Will it not (the press) rather rise to that noble field of spirituality which deals with the better attributes of the soul, and places every man in the same general nearness to Heaven. Will a few paltry dollars paid for advertisements (which never ought to feel the pressure of type) compensate for the loss of that moral dignity which attaches to the highest forms of Spiritualism? Shades of Pythagoras, Seneca, Antonia, Empedocles, Plato and Jesus! are we worthy to hear your voices, or to require the calm atmospheres of your wisdoms?

The writer would urge upon each to consider the development of his own power as the first and last, and paramount attainment of existence. To learn the law of our natures and obey it, comprises almost the smallest and the greatest of our duties. It is time to turn from mere phenomena in the contemplation of that which is truly potent, invisible and eternal.

It is to be doubted whether the divine gifts of healing, prophecy, and discerning of Spirits that attached to Jesus, Paul, Peter, and others, were ever converted into money. It would seem that these blessings were like air and water—to be received and used; not to be made articles of Traffic. We have no account that the imposition of hands (which with them was no imposition) cost a stipulated sum. It was "love's labor," and "without hope of reward." But there was "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination which brought her master much gain by sooth saying" that Spirit Paul "cost out"—but evidently it has *got* again, and comfortably located in its old quarters.

We had hoped there was something in the world that couldn't be bought nor sold; that there was some divine emanation or







Port Plan, N. Y., relates the following fact, which, considering that the medium made no pretension to clairvoyance, may be regarded as a conclusive demonstration of an *obscure* communicating spiritual intelligence:

Mr. Mix, now living in this place, visited Boston last winter, and evening, while there, asked a friend if he would like to go and see one of the Spirit-manifestations. Being answered in the affirmative, accordingly they, together with two other gentlemen, were soon seated at a medium's table. But a few moments elapsed before sounds distinctly heard upon the table. The question was put, Have you anything you would like to communicate? Answer, yes; and the medium's hands were thus extended and handed to the friend of Mr. Mix. The first words heard from the table were heard, and Mr. M., patting the table, was assured that a Spirit-friend was present and would like to manifest. The Spirit was asked to give his name, which he did, to Mr. Mix's surprise, gave the name of an old schoolmate, who, as he supposed, then living in Cambridge. In this case, however, learned of his departure from earth. Mr. Mix then asked where he had fled into the Spirit-land? The Spirit replied, "On the fourth of last last!" On receiving this Mr. M. stated to those present that he must not be some mistake about this, for he was at his friend's house on that day, and when he left (it being about 2 o'clock, P. M.) he was going and getting in a load of hay. The Spirit scorned him that he was so, and, on being interrogated further by Mr. Mix, he was so weak, infirm, and weak through the rage that he fell from a load of hay. Mr. M. immediately wrote to the sister of this departed Spirit, inquiring after the health and welfare of her old friend Charles. In due course of mail he received an answer to his inquiries, corroborating the statements made to him at the medium's table, by saying that on the day he (Mr. Mix) left their place, Charles was a load of hay and a pack-horse, and was killed!

An article from Dr. Goodner on the Davenport manifestations, is in type, but is unavoidably crowded out. We will endeavor to insert it next week.



